

James T. Rhodes House  
367 Benefit Street  
Providence  
Providence County  
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-165

HABS  
RI,  
4-PROV,  
65-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI-165

## JAMES T. RHODES HOUSE

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RI,  
4-PROV,  
65-

Address: 367 Benefit Street, Providence, Providence County,  
Rhode Island.

Plat 16, lot 238, this lot 195 Benefit Street in  
1841; 367 Benefit Street after 1866.

Present Owner: Donald Wallace O'Leary Realty Corporation,  
367 Benefit Street, Providence 3, Rhode Island.

Present Occupant: Owner and renters

Present Use: Apartment House

Brief Statement  
of Significance: This is a large frame house, built about 1840 and  
altered in 1870, which preserves many features  
characteristic of those periods.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

## 1. Original and subsequent owners:

1839 This property on the corner of Williams and  
Benefit Streets was leased by Williams Thayer  
from Harriet Brown, for himself and as trustee  
of James T. Rhodes for a term of 20 years, and  
renewed in 1859...Deed Book 162, page 62, in  
Providence City Hall.

1841 James T. Rhodes lived here for first time...  
Providence Directory.

1844 James T. Rhodes lived here...Providence **D**irectory.

1845 Quit claim deed to land issued by Williams Thayer  
to sister Harriet Brown...Bounded N by Williams  
Street; W on Benefit Street; E by house of  
Cromwell Barney; S by heirs of late Samuel Arnold.  
...Deed Book 97, page 232 in Providence City Hall.

1847 Robert H. Ives, merchant, lived here...Providence  
Directory.

1861 Harriet Brown to James Rhodes by deed. Terminates  
lease to Williams Thayer in 1859...Deed Book 162,  
page 63, in Providence City Hall.

- 1866 James T. Rhodes, manufacture, lived here...  
Providence Directory.
- 1867 Harriet Brown sells to James T. Rhodes for \$1500  
the same lot leased by Williams Thayer in 1839,  
terminating the renewed lease...Deed Book 178,  
page 167, in Providence City Hall.
- 1874 Bessie Rhodes sells the property to Adeline Tobey..  
"a certain lot and house, being the same property  
conveyed to James T. Rhodes by Harriet Brown by  
deed in 1867...Deed Book 251, page 199, in  
Providence City Hall.
- 1874 Adaline C. Tobey Est.
- 1884 S. Augusta Pierson 1/2. Bessie R. Corbin, wife  
of R. W. 1/2
- 1930 Property was taxed to Richard Corbin and J. Fred  
Pierson.
- 1946 Property taxed to Donald Wallace O'Leary Realty  
Corp.

2. Date of erection: Between 1839-1841.
3. Notes on alterations and additions: Originally the house  
had a hip roof with a high monitor. In 1870 mansard roofs  
were added to both the main block and the rear wing, and  
the dormers were added to the main block and the attic  
story made into four rooms. [files of the Providence  
Preservation Society].

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing  
for the Providence Preservation Society  
August 1961.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a large, five-bay,  
two-and-a-half story, frame house with a later mansard  
roof.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

### B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Main front block, about 45' (five  
bays) by 35', two-and-a-half stories high plus cellar,

facing west. Rear wing about 30' long, two-and-a-half stories high but lower than the front block.

2. Foundations: Regular ashlar granite shows on the exterior, thick stone walls on the interior.
3. Wall construction: Presumably frame, covered with clapboards, with wood quoins.
4. Porches: Small, one-story entrance porch, with Ionic columns at the front corners and a full Ionic entablature. Small mansard roof on porch probably not original.
5. Chimneys: Three brick chimneys in main block, two in north wall, one in south wall, with ornamental scrolls, and brick paneled sides, and elaborate stone caps that do not appear to be original. Brick chimney in rear wing. Originally there was a chimney at the south end of the east wall, the foundation for which was removed about 1940.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doors and doorways: Main entrance in center bay on west front, paneled door with two tall vertical panels, in pilaster frame with side lights and top light.
  - b. Windows: Double hung wood windows, six light over six light, molded trim. Heavy window cornices and sill brackets, probably later. Bay window on south side, with round-headed windows, probably later.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Mansard roof, asphalt shingles
  - b. Cornices: Deep modillion cornice with heavy denticulated bed mold. Smaller bracketed cornice at the upper break of the roof.
  - c. Dormers: Wide dormer on north and south sides of house, apparently later than the mansard roof. Narrower dormers on west front, with corner pilasters and eight over eight light double hung windows, apparently date from the time of the mansard roof.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: The house has been cut up into apartments but the main rooms are intact. Originally--central hall, four chimneys (outside), four room plan, same plan on all

floors except top, which was originally one large room with monitor roof. The rear ell belongs to original house--it had two rooms on the first floor with chimney between them. Second floor room at the east, in the ell, behind the chimney was the original bathroom--had big hot water tank and heater, now a dining room.

2. Stairways: First floor plan (original): Hallway was divided front and back with two staircases. The one at the rear is a free-standing spiral staircase. The main staircase is curving. There is a full wall between the front and back hallway with a connecting door.

Main stairway, which goes only to second floor, has one run with curve at top. Unusual turned balusters, with turnings cut to continue riser line across two steps. Step ends decorated with flat applied quarter sunburst type decoration, plaster soffits. Heavy turned newel post, ramped rail that curves at newel and is rounded and flattened to form newel cap.

Back hall, upstairs, continues circular stairs to third floor. These stairs have turned balusters with one section octagonal, step ends have applied cut decoration in scroll design. Hall ceiling on floor above has oval, decorated with plaster leaf pattern, run molding. Skylight is cut and etched glass with red glass border in leaf pattern, probably 1870.

3. Flooring: Floors in whole house were originally about 8" to 10" boards, chestnut. Many now parquet of 1870 and 1940 date. Parquet floors in hall date from 1870--dark border, narrow herringbone pattern for rest. Upper hall repeats form of lower.
4. Doorways and doors: Main block: Door frames and window frames, original, mitred and molded, six panel doors with wide, flat Greek Revival moldings and recessed panels--original. In the ell: six panel doors with old kitchen type panels, mitred door and window frames--original.
5. Trim: southwest room and hall: Plaster walls and plain plaster ceilings, heavy molded cornices, wide molded chair rail. ~~Mantelpiece~~ in this room and bay window were added in 1870. Mantel has been cut to one story. It is black walnut (now painted white). Interesting pomegranate and vine pattern polychrome tiles frame fireplace. Wood paneled sections under windows.

Northwest room: Cornices, frames, windows, doors, and hardware as in southwest room, but no chair rail. Mantel,

probably original with house before 1870 changes; one story wood; in Greek Revival stage with engaged Doric columns; brick hearth.

Library or northeast room: Now cut up to make apartments; original detail similar to other rooms.

Second floor: Southwest room upstairs--plaster cornices; door frames, window frames, doors, under-window panels as in southwest downstairs; no chair rails. 1870 black walnut two-story mantel now cut down to one story; plain panel detail. Interesting iron grate built into fireplace with decorative band of flutings. Southeast room trim as in main floor southwest but no under-window panels and no chair rail. Northwest room has similar detail to southwest main floor; one-story white marble, c 1870, mantel. Northeast room has simpler moldings; plain Greek Revival white marble mantel.

Attic: One story mantel, c 1820, from another house. Doors, frames, plaster cornice in hall as in main rooms downstairs. No cornices in other rooms.

Ell: second floor: Has earlier detail; windows have two panel folding inside shutters. Original one-story wood c 1825 type mantel with engaged Doric colonettes.

6. Hardware: Hardware throughout house, silvered. Small round knobs, keyholes and covers, and butt hinges.
7. Lighting: Electric.
8. Heating: Central.

#### D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces west and is set slightly back from the sidewalks on a southeast corner lot.
2. Enclosures: A dry fieldstone wall, about 2' high, which retains the yard on west and part of north; does not appear to be very old.
3. Outbuildings: Frame garages to east of house, apparently about as old as the house, and originally a stable with hay loft. Small frame one-story building with chimney, unknown use, between house and garage.

4. Walks and driveways: Brick sidewalks on west and north; flagstone walks with granite steps lead to front door. Brick driveway in rear. Brick garden walks.
5. Landscaping: Informal arrangement of shrubs, flowers, and trees, with medium-sized lawn on south side of house.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect  
National Park Service  
and Antoinette F. Downing  
for the Providence Preservation Society  
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